



**VA Healthcare System of Ohio  
VISN 10**

**CARES BULLETIN No. 2- October 2002**

**WHAT IS CARES?**

Simply stated, CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) is a realignment study to objectively evaluate the best ways to provide high-quality health care services to more veterans in more locations during the next 20 years.

**WHY IS VA IMPLEMENTING CARES?**

VA needed a new way to address projected changes in veteran population—their locations and medical needs—and to continue to bring VA's health care system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. CARES will help VA to be a better steward of its assets, make better use of existing space and realign resources to better meet the needs of veterans.

**CURRENT NEWS**

We are currently in the Demand Analysis stage of CARES. A demand analysis will determine the demand for services in 2012 and 2022 based on population projections, market share and other factors including age and projected case mix. An external consultant will complete county specific market demand analysis and, in conjunction with National Cares Program Office (NCPO), will develop an analysis of the gaps between current and needed facilities and services. We expect to receive the demand analysis information in early October 2002.

**WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP IN THE CARES PROCESS?**

Upon receipt of the demand analysis data from the external contractor, Networks and NCPO will begin analyzing the data in preparation for the development of Planning Initiatives. This step will take place in October 2002. NCPO will analyze where gaps exist in the Network as a whole and within each Market. This step will be conducted by NCPO in collaboration with Networks, Market Teams and stakeholders. As part of this analysis, underserved veteran populations will be identified, as well as facilities with low demand or duplications in services in areas where VA facilities are in close proximity to one another. Adjustments will be made to address the special needs of veterans, such as blind and spinal cord injury rehabilitation, long-term care and alternatives to institutional long-term care.

In late October 2002, Planning Initiatives will be forwarded to Networks for review and development of solutions that address gaps or duplications of services. For each Initiative, Networks will conduct a cost-analysis and assessment using CARES planning criteria. Networks also may develop recommendations for additional Planning Initiatives to propose to NCPO. Stakeholders will be part of the solution development process. Each

Network will then develop a Market Plan from the completed Planning Initiatives that will provide a blueprint for matching VA facilities and services with veterans' future health care needs. The Market Plans will be incorporated into the draft National CARES Plan.

Once approved by the Under Secretary for Health, an independent CARES Commission will evaluate the draft National CARES Plan, which also will be published for public comment. As part of its review, the CARES Commission will solicit input from stakeholders, consider comments received during the 60-day public comment period and hold public hearings. Following its review and evaluation, the Commission will forward its recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who will make his decision on the National CARES Plan in late 2003.

### **WHAT OPPORTUNITY IS THERE FOR STAKEHOLDERS TO HAVE A SAY IN CARES?**

During the study, VA will involve veterans, VA employees, unions, academic affiliates and local and national elected officials to seek their input and to ensure their concerns are addressed. Comments from stakeholders are welcome and encouraged throughout the CARES process. Briefings will be conducted at both the national and local levels at each stage of CARES Phase II. NCPO receives monthly reports on each Network's CARES communications with stakeholders. Stakeholder comments will be solicited and considered in the development of Planning Initiatives and Market Plans, during the public comment period and at CARES Commission hearings. Comments may be provided by mail, e-mail, phone, and town meetings. To provide input or obtain more information about CARES, contact the Public Affairs Officer at your local facility by telephone or mail. We will continue to brief our stakeholders throughout this process and send out information on CARES as it becomes available. For your convenience, we also have an electronic CARES comment card available on our Network Internet Web site at: <http://www.va.gov/visn10/>.

### **HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON CARES?**

Bulletins on CARES will be sent with updated information at least monthly and more often if needed. For employees, veterans, and other stakeholders, CARES information is available on the Network Internet Web site at: <http://www.va.gov/visn10/>.

The national CARES Web site is at <http://www.va.gov/CARES>.